



DATE: February 13, 2019

TO: Planning & Development Committee

FROM: Jeff Shaw, Senior Director of Public Policy & Advocacy, The Alliance

RE: H.B. No. 6939 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MUNICIPAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS

Good afternoon Senator Cassano, Representative McCarthy Vahey, Senator Champagne, Representative Zawistowski and members of the Planning & Development Committee:

My name is Jeff Shaw, Senior Director of Public Policy & Advocacy, of the Connecticut Community Nonprofit Alliance (The Alliance). The Alliance is the statewide advocacy organization representing nonprofits, with a membership of more than 300 community organizations and associations. Nonprofits deliver essential services to more than half a million people each year and employ almost 14% of Connecticut's workforce.

The Alliance supports H.B. 6939, An Act Concerning the Establishment of Municipal Cultural Districts, which seeks to increase awareness of cultural institutions and recognize their economic contributions in communities across Connecticut. Arts and cultural institutions are key strategic partners as municipalities seek economic development initiatives.

Arts and culture nonprofits generate \$797 million in annual economic activity, support over 23,000 jobs and provide \$72 million in local and state tax revenue. Arts and cultural initiatives lead to vibrant downtowns, support innovation and creativity, and provide an improved quality of life that attract businesses and families to live, work and play in the community.

As this proposal takes shape, I respectfully encourage you to consider the current format of the Regional Service Organizations within the Office of the Arts in the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) as a model for organization. Nine Regional Service Organizations (RSOs) serve as local field offices to connect local arts organizations, individual artists, volunteers and other supporters to resources and opportunities within the Connecticut Office of the Arts. Communication also flows from the Connecticut Office of the Arts, to the RSOs, and finally, to organizations within their region. Municipal cultural districts should be designed to match the RSO regions to encourage collaboration, communication and promotion of events, services and resources.

There is a \$7 to \$1 return on investment of funding for arts and cultural programs (greater than the ROI on tourism which is \$3 to \$1). Establishing Municipal Cultural Districts could provide additional visibility and awareness of these institutions and increase economic activity and opportunities for all cities and towns.

Thank you for your consideration.